

**A STUDY OF THE OUTCOMES OF
COLLABORATIVE AND STRUCTURED SUPPORT
FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS
TO FACILITATE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
FOR STUDENTS WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

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ABSTRACT

Australian commonwealth legislation and government education policies (Victoria, Australia) indicate a commitment to schools becoming more inclusive and responsive to the diversity of students' needs. The current study was designed as a model of how policy might become part of practice for primary school students who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The implemented model was based on guidelines in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model (Simpson, de Boer-Ott, & Smith-Myles, 2003) and the Integrative Model of Effective Educational Intervention (Kunce, 2003). Key elements of the model were: whole school training, ongoing training and support of the teacher (and teacher aide) in relation to a particular student, parental involvement, and involvement of an autism consultant for four months. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for collaborative and equitable relationships between the parties supporting the student and the benefit of structured interventions across multiple domains of student functioning.

Eighteen primary school students (5-12 years) participated in the study across nine mainstream rural and regional schools. The primary aim of the study was to assess the effect of support of teachers on student behaviour. Students were allocated into one of two groups. In the first time period Group One received the intervention and Group Two was a wait-control group. In the second time period Group Two received the intervention. Quantitative measures of the controlled part of the study were undertaken in relation to behaviours specifically related to an Autism Spectrum Disorder using questions from the Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders (DISCO). In the first time period results indicated an improvement in Total behaviours specifically related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and particularly Self-care, Communication, Social Interaction, and Repetitive and Stereotyped Behaviours. Similar results were found in the second time period. Measures of executive functioning and clinical problem behaviours using other instruments were also undertaken pre and post each group's intervention period. No significant changes in executive functioning

were evident. However, teacher and parent report both indicated a significant improvement in Attention Problems and Aggressive Behaviours for the sample. Teacher and parent gains were also measured qualitatively. Teachers reported marked gains in knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders and educational interventions and parents reported positive gains in knowledge and especially gains from increased communication with teachers.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature:

Date:

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In another sense though, none of this project would have been possible without the dedication of the teachers and parents who took part and the students for whom it was all probably 'just another day at school'.